

AFRICA



Dr Brown's safari for beginners

From the African location of *I'm a Celebrity ...*, host **Chris Brown** reveals how to survive your own amazing safari adventure

ANIMAL LORE:
(clockwise from main)
Chris Brown and Julia Morris cruise down an African river heading for the start of the *I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out Of Here!* show; and Brown with a baby African rock python.
Main picture:
Nigel Wright



THOUSANDS of zebras migrating across lush, vivid green grasslands, herds of elephants roaming scenic planes and lions stalking a potential kill. There's nothing quite like an African safari. Between off-roading in some of the most remote areas in the world and getting up close to these animals in their natural habitats; a safari is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

One man who understands this more than most is *Bondi Vet* star – and co-host of *Ten's The Living Room* and *I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out Of Here!* – Dr Chris Brown. A longtime African safari goer, his work has taken him to Africa time and time again, and now – as his second outing in the African bush for *I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out Of Here!* screens – the animal-lover has expert advice for those planning a trip.

Location, location, location

You really need to do your research way ahead of time. Obviously, you want to see animals – a lot of animals ideally – but equally the whole point of the safari is that the experience should be pretty authentic. I don't enjoy game reserves where the animals have just

been brought there – it's kind of like a glorified farm.

For that reason, I like game reserves that are part of national parks. The animals have free range and can come in and out at will, there'll be a natural flow and some sort of migration will be going on, so you'll see the real deal.

My favourites are around the Kruger National Park in South Africa, in particular the ones that make up the Sabi Sand Game Reserve and in Kenya, the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. In both places you'll see circle of life – which Africa is so famous for – in action.

Get your timing right

The biggest influence is season. If you're there in the dry season (from June to September) you don't get much vegetation, which makes it very easy to see animals and get better photos as a result, but on the flip side at this time of year they're definitely less active and it tends to be more expensive. In the wet season, there's a lot more food around, which means you'll see a lot more life. However, this means it's harder to see the animals as the grass is longer.

You'll also want to consider the migration patterns of animals. These

vary, so it's a good idea to research animal migration predictions for the season during which you plan to travel. Always talk to the lodges ahead of time – they'll ask you what you want to see and will usually try to tailor your trip around that.

In short, there's no bad time to go, it just comes down to a priorities – do you just want to see a lot of animals or do you just want to get some great photos?

Hired help

Having a good guide turns an already spectacular experience into a really informative one. They always have interesting stories and such a huge knowledge base, not just about animals but the environment in general.

I feel like I know a decent amount about African wildlife, yet I always learn something new when I go out with guides. Being on a safari where you're actually part of finding the animals is thrilling. You'll hear a call and the guide will explain what it is and they'll point out tracks, while talking you through how they spot animals.

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AFRICA

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I remember on my last trip a guide taught me how to track a leopard by its scent. Now, I know if I'm in the African bush and smell popcorn that a leopard is likely nearby.

Bring the kids

I think safari is an amazing experience for kids – in addition to being entertaining, it also teaches them about the wildlife, the environment, and local culture. I first went on safari when I was 25, but I know that if I had been as a child I would have been blown away. It's like a zoo come to life.

Saying that, you need to have children who are mature and old enough to be able to follow instructions – a lot of the rules on safari are there for your safety, so you have to abide by them. Also, they'll need to be able to endure long stretches of waiting quietly for animals (a few books will come in handy). A few lodges also operate childcare centres.



AFRICAN AFFAIR: Tourists on a safari at Sabi Sands game reserve, South Africa; and Chris Brown on set with two giant snails.



Splurge versus save

When it comes to safari, the age-old analogy of "you get what you pay for" is true. The more you pay, generally the more exclusive the accommodation and the smaller the safari group will be – and that's the most important thing. Believe me, nothing takes away from the thrill of seeing a leopard – or similar – slowly emerge from behind a tree and then have five other vehicles pull up alongside yours and scare it off.

Pack right

You certainly don't need to go the full safari attire – that really isn't necessary. Just be sensible. The idea of safari gear is to allow you to blend in with the environment and to protect you from

branches, the sun and insects, such as mosquitos and ticks – of which there are plenty. Wear loose-fitting, light clothing that covers your legs and arms. Also, avoid anything too bright or shiny. I generally just wear jeans or beige pants and a long-sleeved, cotton shirt. Sunscreen and insect repellent are absolute essentials too.

Get snap happy

A safari is the ideal playground to take amazing pics, whether you're an amateur photographer or a pro. My top tip is to be really particular about where you sit in the safari vehicle – you want to be as close to the front as possible, ideally directly behind the driver. Everyone thinks you get a

better view in the back when you're higher up, but it's the worse place for photography as you're looking down at the animal. When it comes to animal photography, you want to be eye level.

The temptation with photography on safari is to get as close to the animal as possible to get their faces almost filling the frame. I think pulling back a bit and getting some of the landscape tells more of a story. If you can place that animal in their environment – and yet make them the feature of the shot – you have a great snap.

Think eco

Ensuring that the safari experience you have will be around for generations to come is so important and it starts with

visitors and the operators they use. Ask questions, look at online reviews and investigate how eco-friendly their operation is. By doing this, the less scrupulous operators will – hopefully – get fewer customers in the long run. Lion parks, for example – and there are plenty of them – are often unethical. They breed a lot of lions, hand raise them so that people can have an experience with a lion cub and then afterwards they'll often be used in the game hunting industry.

Interview by Paul Ewart.
I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out Of Here! airs live at 6.30pm Sundays and 7.30pm Monday to Thursday on Channel 10. Instagram [drchrisbrown](#) Twitter [@bondivert](#)

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